

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL
January 18, 2008**

A meeting of the Pigeon River Country Advisory Council was held on Friday, January 18, 2008 at the Pigeon River Country Management Unit Headquarters. Chairman Gustafson called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Don Huff, Bob Bolinger, Ken Glasser, Mark Ennes, Pete Gustafson, Eugene Horan, John Walters, Dick Myers, Jim Supina, Arch Reeves, Dave Smethurst, Randy Sanders, Rique Campa and Bob Hess

MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Estes, Mike Castle, Bud Slingerlend, and Carol Clute

EX-OFFICIO PRESENT Brian Mastenbrook and Laurie Marzolo

EX-OFFICIO ABSENT: Rick Henderson and Dave Borgeson

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Brown, Nick Torsky, Hat Oliver, Jude Jarecki, Bill O'Neill, Sally Charest, Tom Charest, Mindy Koch, Lynne Boyd, Jack Wilson, Ronda Everingham, John Goodwin, and Joe Jarecki

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS:

Chairman Gustafson passed out copies of the updated Concept of Management to Council members and thanked everyone in attendance for the role they played in getting it done. He said he is optimistic that it will serve as well as the original did.

Gustafson said that Mike Estes from Traverse City was appointed to fill the vacancy created by Ben Bartlett's resignation. He said Estes was unable to attend due to a prior commitment but expects to be at the next Council meeting.

Citing multiple health issues, Bud Slingerlend has tendered his resignation. Gustafson suggested recognizing Bud with a plaque at the next meeting. He will draft a resolution for Council members to consider.

Director Humphries' husband, Bob, passed away unexpectedly in December. A card was sent and a contribution was made on behalf of the Advisory Council to the charity that the family had designated – the MSU Air and Small Bore Rifle Club.

AGENDA

No changes to the published agenda were requested.

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 19, 2007 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Bolinger, support by Huff to approve the October 19, 2007 minutes as published. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

PIGEON RIVER HABITAT INITIATIVE REPORT

Pigeon River Habitat Initiative Co-chair, Ty Ratliff, described the history and objectives of the PRHI and introduced part time PRHI employee Eric Nelson who is working to implement the objectives. Ratliff listed some accomplishments including site visits, habitat improvement projects and spin offs such as conservation easements.

Nelson discussed some of the tools he has in his kit to help landowners manage their property to meet their objectives while at the same time their land acts as a buffer from development for the Pigeon River Country State Forest. He said he will continue to work with landowners, but the PRHI will also move in a new direction which is to work with local units of government on land use planning since they have a strong influence on what the landscape looks like. He is in the process of obtaining the master plans from the 26 townships in the project area. His primary function will be education.

Ratliff said that they are working on several grants for continued funding of the PRHI. He thanked DNR personnel present for their support and said that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation funding happened because the DNR formally signed on as a PRHI partner. He said a spin off benefit of the PRHI is that several PRHI landowner contacts have also resulted in the landowner putting their land into a conservation easement. He encouraged everyone to support the PRHI by encouraging organizations that they are part of, such as sportsman's clubs and township boards, to become partners.

Ratliff and Nelson answered many questions from Advisory Council members.

CONCEPT OF MANAGEMENT REPORT

DNR Resource Management Deputy Mindy Koch said she is here to give a brief update about the Concept of Management and to get Advisory Council input on what is being proposed for a Recreation Planning Group to take a more detailed look at the horse use and bicycle sections of the updated Concept to see if there are things that need to be adjusted.

Koch described some of the reasons that the Concept was updated and said that the updated Concept was approved at the November 2007 Natural Resources Commission Meeting by Director Humphries. Reasons to update the Concept included: scientific knowledge, especially in wildlife and vegetation management, has increased in the last 30+ years; the PRC grew to include lands previously managed as part of the PRC but not formally under the Concept; and changing recreation pressures. The approved Concept of Management is a plan and does not actually implement any changes. Any new restrictions on activities require a Director's Order to actually implement. The first restriction limited snowmobiles and was implemented by a Director's Order which was approved at the December NRC meeting.

Koch said that the biggest controversy about the updated Concept was about recreational activities. The new Recreational Use Criteria give good guidelines for making decisions. The Steering Committee which oversaw the process for updating the Concept realized more work needs to be done regarding horseback and bicycle use. They are thinking about putting together a workgroup to make recommendations about those two issues and would like the Advisory Council's input. The ideas the Steering Committee has so far are:

1. Need to take into account the Commission direction that the plan must be enforceable.
2. Provide clear direction to the land managers but give them some flexibility too.
3. Consider the history of land acquisition. Most of the PRC was purchased with Fish and Game funds. That comes with restrictions. Wildlife and fish habitat and recreational hunting and fishing take priority. Other recreation cannot be in conflict. The federal government, which provided much of the funding, is most upset with equestrian use. The

Department must comply with federal regulations even if state fish and game funds are used.

4. Would not be a re-write of the Concept. Would only address horse use, camping with horses and mountain bike use.
5. Looking for ideas from the workgroup about how to control user numbers. Also interested in controlling user impacts, but especially looking for ideas on how to control user numbers.
6. It will be an inclusive group. The Advisory Council and PRC Association are invited to participate. Representation will be both from organized groups and from individual users. Other groups that will be included are Michigan Mountain Bike Association, Michigan Trail Riding Association, DNR staff, and Resource Stewards. The group will be limited to 20 members.
7. The objective is to have approved Director's Orders to implement new restrictions on bicycle and equestrian users at the May NRC meeting which means the recommendation must be completed in March so the group will have to act quickly.
8. Meetings will be open to the public and public comment will be taken.

Koch said some things the workgroup will be considering are that the updated Concept calls for closing offsite camps but facilities that allow large groups are left open. Also, bicycle damage on the Shingle Mill Pathway may not be there, so it may be okay to open the Shingle Mill Pathway to bicycles. She said the idea is to decide how to put teeth (Director's Orders) into the plan (Concept) with respect to horseback and mountain bike use only.

She also said that, if budgets allow hiring more Conservation Officers, they hope to move a C.O. into the PRC.

Chairman Gustafson said the Advisory Council accepts the invitation to have two seats on the workgroup. He asked that the history of Council advice in the Minutes about horseback use and bicycles be distributed to both the workgroup and the Council.

Council members expressed a strong interest in the Council being part of the process. After discussion on the issue, Gustafson said if there is formal reconsideration by a group that affects the management guidelines for the PRC, then the Advisory Council should have opportunity to express its recommendation before a decision is made by the Director. After further discussion:

Motion by Smethurst, support by Supina that the Advisory Council requests the opportunity to review the recommendation about horse use and mountain bicycles before it goes to the Director. Motion Carried.

Koch passed out information about the DNR budget. She said the \$10 million people have heard about is Fund Balance, much of which was set aside for emergencies by Commission policy. She said it is larger than anticipated because of more savings from cuts and more license revenue than was estimated.

BREAK 8:23 to 8:51 p.m.

DNR FOREST, MINERAL & FIRE MANAGEMENT DIVISION REPORT

FMFM Chief Lynne Boyd said that as of this afternoon, the expired Council member appointments of Rique Campa, Randy Sanders and Jim Supina were approved for re-appointment until December 31, 2010. Mike Castle will also be re-appointed if he wants.

MUCC is being asked who they want to represent them due to Bud Slingerland's resignation.

The PRC Enforcement Officer will be Eastern Lower Peninsula District Supervisor Dayle Garlock instead of Acting Unit Manager Laurie Marzolo.

The FMFM budget is not in good shape. The 20 campgrounds that were closed last year will remain closed. If money can be found to fix the wells, Pigeon Bridge and the closed loop in Pickerel Lake will be opened but Johnson's Crossing will remain closed. 30 more campgrounds will be closed if supplemental funding is not provided by the legislature. FMFM may be down to 70 Fire Officers. The cost of pathway grooming being done now (\$21,000 so far) comes from the campground budget. A supplemental request (mid year budget increase) has been submitted to put some of the money back in the FMFM budget that was removed during the regular budget process.

The question was asked when the PRC Unit Manager position will be filled. Koch said that Department wide last year almost all vacancies were unable to be filled. FMFM has continuing budget problems and will not have many vacancies filled this year.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

Wildlife Division

Brian Mastenbrook passed out three sheets about the elk hunts and the elk survey. He said the elk hunts had higher than normal number of animal taken. The goal was 103 and the actual was 120. Only three animals were taken east of M33 in the high TB incidence area which is unfortunate.

The aerial population survey started Wednesday and will continue as long as needed to complete the grid pattern. The projection is that it will take 8 - 10 days.

FMFM Division

Laurie Marzolo went over her written report (copy attached). She referred to the Red Pine Project that she discussed at the last meeting and said staff has identified red pine stands to harvest in addition to those that were identified in the annual compartment review process. The additional stands will be reviewed in a special Statewide Compartment Review. 93 additional acres of red pine were identified to be sold in 2008. 107 additional acres will be considered as part of the regular compartment review process this summer.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Nominating Committee Chair Eugene Horan said that he and fellow Committee members Dick Myers and Dave Smethurst recommend Ken Glasser as chair and Rique Campa as vice chair. He said that both have agreed to serve if elected.

Motion by Horan, support by Gustafson to nominate Ken Glasser as Chair and Rique Campa as Vice Chair of the PRC Advisory Council. Motion Carried.

Motion by Smethurst, support by Bolinger to close nominations and to cast a unanimous ballot for the nominees. Motion carried.

Motion by Smethurst, support by Walters that the Advisory Council thanks Pete Gustafson for being a good, effective and efficient Chair of the Advisory Council for several years. Motion Carried. (Gustafson was elected at the Aug 16, 2002 meeting and served as Chair for five

years and five months.)

CONCEPT OF MANAGEMENT REPORT CONTINUED

After discussion about choosing the two Council representatives who will be on the workgroup and about how the Council will give input given the limited time frame:

Motion by Smethurst, support by Campa, to hold a special meeting to consider the recommendation of the recreation workgroup. Motion carried.

The consensus was that Chairman Glasser will appoint two Council members to represent the Council on the Recreation Workgroup from the list of those who applied on the sign up sheet that was circulated during the meeting.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A request was made for a presentation about GIS and its potential to help with issues like updating the Vehicle Access Plan and other PRC resource needs.

A request was made for a proactive report on how the Sinkhole Lake plan will be implemented this spring.

ADJOURN

Motion by Bolinger, support by Horan to adjourn at 9:43 p.m. Motion carried.

Minutes were taken and summarized by Joe Jarecki.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laurie Marzolo, Secretary